

Message Text

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ACTION ORM-02

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 NEA-10 ISO-00 DHA-02 VO-03 CIAE-00
FBIE-00 INSE-00 NSAE-00 SCA-01 DODE-00 SY-05 DEAE-00
/032 W

-----081814Z 073897 /43

R 081600Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

TO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

INFO AMCONSUL UDORN

SECSTATE WASHDC 1230

AMEMBASSY KABUL

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SECSTATE FOR D/HA/ORM

E.O. 11652: N/A

SUBJ: LAO REFUGEE THAO THONGSERN

FORMER USAID/LAOS SUPPLY MANAGEMENT DIVISON (SMD/BHS) EMPLOYEE, THAO THONGSERN HAS WRITTEN LETTER TO FORMER SUPERVISOR JACK HUXTABLE OF RDO/Y ADVISING FOLLOWING: FACING CONTINUED SEPARATION FROM FAMILY AND UNCEASING ALLEGATIONS OF SYPIING BY THE NEW REGIME IN LAOS, THONGSERN ESCAPED ON 2/17/77 TO NONG KHAI, THAILAND BY SWIMMING THE MEKONG RIVER THROUGH A BARRAGE OF COMMUNIST GUNFIRE. (THE BODIES OF SEVERAL OF HIS FRIENDS, KILLED IN THE CROSSING, WERE LEFT FLOATING IN THE RIVER). HUXTABLE WISHES PROVIDE FOLLOWING REGARDING THONGSERN'S USAID CAREER/ASSOCIATION IN HOPES IT MAY SERVE TO AUGMENT HUMANITARIAN CONCERN FOR THE CASE AND IMPROVE HIS CHANCES FOR PAROLE TO THE U.S.

1. THONGSERN'S ASSOCIATION WITH USAID AND AMERICANS BEGAN IN 1967 AT AGE 17 WHEN HE WAS HIRED AS A LABORER TO FILL IN CRATERS WHICH RESULTED FROM A MISTAKEN U.S. BOMBING MISSION ON HIS HOME
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TOWN OF MUANG PHALANE IN EASTERN SAVANNAKHET PROVINCE HWERE USAID WAS INVOLVED IN A COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM. HIS FATHER'S DRY GOODS STORE, ONE OF NUMEROUS STRUCTURES DEMOLISHED IN THE RAID, WAS REBUILT IN A USAID RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT, BECAUSE OF THE VILLAGES' "STRATEGIC LOCATION NEAR THE HO CHI MINH TRAIL".

2. THREE MONTHS FOLLOWING THE RECONSTRUCTION OF MUANG PHALANE, THE VILLAGE, (OF APPROXIMATELY 250 HOUSES) WAS TURNED INTO A FLAMING INFERNO, DURING A COMMUNIST ATTACK, AND COMPLETELY DESTROYED. THONGSERN AND HIS FAMILY WERE ENCAMPED WITH SEVERAL THOUSAND OTHER WAR REFUGEES FROM EASTERN SAVANNAKHET AT SENO.

3. INGENUITY AND A GRASP OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE HELPED THONGSERN FIND MORE PERMANENT USAID EMPLOYMENT, FIRST AT A SAYABOURY REGIONAL USAID MOTORPOOL, LATER IN VIETIANE, IN AN ON THE JOB SMB TRAINING PROGRAM, AND EVENTUALLY AS CHIEF OF THE SPARE PARTS SECTION OF SMD/BHS.

4. LOYALTY, HONESTY AND UNDERSTANDING OF U.S. OBJECTIVES, AS WELL AS UNTIRING SUPPORT TO AMERICAN PERSONNEL WERE INTEGRAL PARTS OF HIS MAKE UP. AT ONE POINT IN HIS EIGHT YEAR USIA CAREER AT SAYABOURY, HE HEADED A VOLUNTARY UNIT TO PROVIDE PROTECTION FOR U.S. GOVERNMENT PERSONNEL AND PROPERTY. WHEN USAID WAS TERMINATED IN BAN HOUET SAI IN 1975, DEDICATION AND PERSEVERANCE KEPT HIM HELPING AMERICANS TO THE END, DESPITE CONSIDERABLE DAMAGE TO HIS LOCAL "IMAGE", VIS A VIS THE NEW LEADERSHIP.

5. BECAUSE OF STRONG FAMILY TIES, AND A DESIRE TO GIVE THE NEW REGIME (WHICH BEGAN AS A COALITION GOVERNMENT) A TRY, THONGSEN CHOSE TO REMAIN IN LAOS UNTIL SEVERAL MONTHS AGO, WHEN IT BECAME UNMISTAKABLY CLEAR THAT HE WOULD CONTINUE TO BE REQUIRED PERFORM FORCED LABOR, ENDURE FAMILY SEPARATION AND HARASSMENT AS A RESULT OF HIS FORMER ASSOCIATION WITH THE US GOVERNMENT.

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6. THONGSERN, WHO IS NOW REPORTEDLY BEING HELD BY THAI IMMIGRATION AUTHORITIES AT A NOGN KHAI POLICE COMPOUND, LEFT LAOS FOR FEAR OF CONTINUED POLITICAL PERSECUTION. HE FACES BLEAK PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE WITH NO RELATIVES TO HELP HIM AND WOULD LIKE TO REGISTER FOR POSSIBLE PAROLE TO THE U.S. BUT BECAUSE OF HIS CONFINEMENT IS UNABLE TO DO SO.

7. FOR UDORN: APPRECIATE ANY REPRESENTATION POSSIBLE, (CONSIDERING THONGSERN'S PREVIOUS EIGHT YEARS U.S. GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT), WHICH MIGHT RESULT IN HIS RELEASE.

8. FOR KABUL: USAID/STONE, (FORMER AREA COORDINATOR, SAVANNAKHET) MAY WISH TO COMMENT.
SPIRO

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT, BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION
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Sent Date: 08-Mar-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977YAOUND00997
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770079-1020
Format: TEL
From: YAOUNDE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770380/aaaacspg.tel
Line Count: 111
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 237b5ebb-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ORM
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3170570
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LAO REFUGEE THAO THONGSERN FORMER USAID/LAOS SUPPLY MANAGEMENT DIVISON (SMD/BHS) EMPLOYEE, THAO THONGSERN HAS WRITTEN LETTER TO FORMER SUPERV
TAGS: SREF, (THAO THONGSERN)
To: BANGKOK
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/237b5ebb-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009